

Agricultural.

Facts and Statistics of American Agriculture.

In a paper by Mr. John Jay, lately read by him before the Geographical and Statistical Society of New York, we are furnished with some most interesting statistics of our Nation's agriculture. We make the following extracts from his published essay:

The census taken for 1850 shows Indian corn, our native grain, to be the great staple of the country, yielding at that time six hundred millions of bushels, valued at three hundred millions of dollars; more than the combined value of the three next staples, wheat, cotton and hay. This crop is grown from our northern to our southern limit, and affords a better test than any other of the advance of American tillage. In no state has it retrograded. Its increase from 1840 to 1850 was fifty-six per cent., while the increase of population was but thirty-five per cent. The crop for 1855 was estimated at eight hundred millions of bushels—nearly double the crop of 1840. As a distinguished American agriculturist has remarked, it may be said of our Indian corn, as has been said of the turnip crop of England, that its failure for three successive years would nearly bankrupt the nation.

As food for men and animals, it is alike important. To it we owe much of our beef, the greater part of our pork, and a comparatively small quantity is consumed in the manufacture of malt and spirituous liquors. American corn meal is generally used in the West Indies, and it is being gradually introduced in Europe. The Prussian Government has instituted experimental inquiries as to its value and mode of preparation.

The wheat crop from 1840 to 1850 increased only fifteen per cent. In New England, the cultivation during that time declined fifty per cent. It languishes in New York, is nearly stationary in the Middle States, but is increasing largely in the North-western States. Chicago, which about twenty years ago imported flour and meal for her own consumption, is now the greatest primary grain market in the world—rivaling Odessa and Galatz, Dantzig and St. Petersburg, and her brands of flour are recognized throughout Europe.

In New York, the wheat crop from 1840 to 1850 declined twenty-five per cent., while the corn crop increased nearly one hundred per cent.

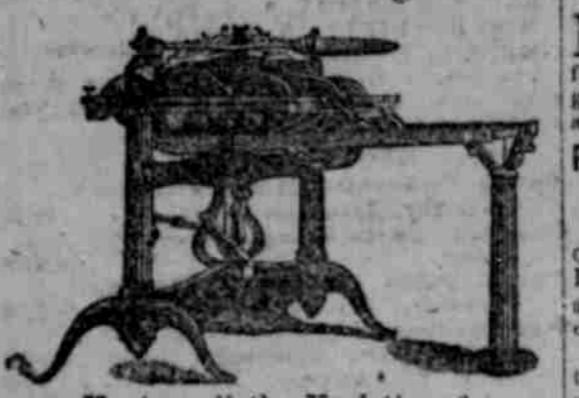
Of our exports of breadstuffs, wheat is the largest item. In 1850 the proportion was \$40,000,000 worth of wheat to only \$7,000,000 of Indian corn.

Our exports of breadstuffs of late years have singularly varied. In 1847, owing to the Irish famine, they rose to \$68,000,000. They fell in 1852 to \$37,000,000, and in 1852 to \$25,000,000, rising again in 1854 to \$65,000,000, sinking the next year to \$38,000,000, and again rising in 1857 to \$77,000,000.

The averaged export price of flour, as ascertained by the Secretary of the Treasury for those years, does not explain these fluctuations. The price in 1852 was \$1.24; in 1853, five dollars and sixty cents; 1854, seven dollars and seventy cents; in 1855, ten dollars. They were probably owing, in part, to fluctuations in the home supply, as well as in the foreign demand, influenced somewhat by the European and Eastern wars. It is most desirable that the causes of such fluctuations should be ascertained, as they tend to excite doubts in regard to the certainty of agricultural profits; and the element of uncertainty naturally discourages and deters prudent men.

Another, of an opposite character, and yet more importance, is the gradual deterioration of the soil going on in the older States, and commencing in the new; reducing the average of crops to the acre far below the average on the soil of Europe, which has been cultivated for centuries. Of wheat, the average in New York, Ohio, and Indiana is twelve bushels to the acre, while in England it is twenty-one, in Flanders twenty-three, and in Scotland thirty. How far it might be increased by culture is shown by occasional crops of seventy in England, fifty in New York, and—as reported eighty-seven at San Jose, in California.

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